INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE AND WAREHOUSE UNION

PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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SADIE WILLIAMS OF ILWU LOCAL 10, PCPA

INTERVIEWEE: SADIE WILLIAMS

INTERVIEWERS: HARVEY SCHWARTZ

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HARVEY SCHWARTZ 00:10

This is Harvey Schwartz. I'm in Vancouver, British Columbia, at the PCPA Convention 17th of September, 2019. And this is part of the PCPA Oral History Project and I'm with Sadie Williams. Sadie, can you tell me where you were born and when you were born?

SADIE WILLIAMS 00:30

I was born February 25, 1924, in Houston, Texas.

HARVEY 00:39

Okay. What were your parents doing in Houston, Texas?

SADIE 00:44

My parents were Logan and Katie Lucas-Carter, my father two years before I was born owned a restaurant, where all longshoremen had to eat because the docks was too far from town for the longshoremen to go and have their lunch. And this was in 1922, which was two years before I was born. And of course, I had a sister, of that of that union two children were born: Louise. Louis was born in 1922, the same time my father opened the restaurant on the docks, which was Anderson Clayton Ship Channel, in Houston, Texas. And my sister was, as I said, two years and a half older than I am. So we were born and raised in Houston. Never moved a day until after I had graduated from Hughes Business College, and I relocated in San Francisco.

HARVEY 00:01:57

Okay.

SADIE 00:01:57

But all of my 95 years I have been supported on the waterfront.

HARVEY 00:02:06

Was your dad a longshoreman?

SADIE 00:02:08

No, he was not, he was a restaurant owner, where all longshoremen had to eat. But they signed vouchers to eat in my father's restaurant. And he had paper money that looked very much like the Monopoly money. If you signed a voucher for $20 he'd give you $20 of his money that you would come the rest of the week and eat in his restaurant. And the vouchers went up to the office of Anderson Clayton Ship Channel. And the money was taken out of your check before you even got it. And was always checks, big checks, given to my dad every Friday from the waterfront.

HARVEY 00:02:51

Was the International Longshoreman's Association the representative for the workers who around the waterfront at that time?

SADIE 00:03:01

I could not answer that, Harvey. I'm sorry. I don't know about ILWU at that time.

HARVEY 00:03:07

Okay.

SADIE 00:03:07

In Houston, Texas, you'll have to find out what they were in 1922.

HARVEY 00:03:13

Okay. What's it like growing up there?

SADIE 00:03:18

Well, I had a marvelous time. I never knew nothing about the Depression. It's because of my father and the success with the longshoremen. I could not--and I was 10 years old-- I cannot tell you anything about the Depression. Sorry to say that, but it's a fact.

HARVEY 00:03:37

But did you when you were 10 years old, it was 1934. Approximately?

SADIE 00:03:41

Yes, that is exactly right.

HARVEY 00:03:43

But you don't remember the Depression?

SADIE 00:03:45

I knew nothing about the Depression because of my father.

HARVEY 00:03:51

Okay.

SADIE 00:03:52

Owning the restaurant where all longshoremen had to eat. There was no place else for them to eat, and this includes the ship channel. As I said before, it was too far for them to go into town to have lunch, the docks were too far.

HARVEY 00:04:08

But you were growing up in the Deep South. I mean--

SADIE 00:04:10

I grew up in Houston, Texas. I was born in Houston never moved a day. I lived in Houston until I relocated in San Francisco. And by that time I had graduated from, as I said, Hughes Business College and was married, and my husband was a longshoreman. That's why I said I can vouch 93 of my 95 years on earth I've been supported.

HARVEY 00:04:40

But I've gotta ask you, what was the discrimination like in Texas at that time when you were a kid? I know, you know your dad, he had enough money coming in. But what was the social atmosphere like for you growing up?

SADIE 00:04:52

I had a wonderful--and I really hate to say this, Harvey--I don't remember any hardships. My mother and father were buying a home when they had their first child, which is two years older than I am. So I would say all my life I've been--I don't know what you want to call us, middle class? I'll say what, the word I like is working class. So all of my life, I cannot tell you of the hardships. I lived in a community where Dr. [?Pennington?] was directly across the street from me, and he was the doctor of all the Negro--at that time--public schools. He was the doctor for the public school. And then two doors down for me was Dr. Allen, who was a dentist, so I lived in a community, I was born in a community and was raised in that same community.

HARVEY 00:05:53

Did you have much interaction with white folks?

SADIE 00:05:56

No, no, no. Most things were we had our own grocery stores and our community. No, I did not. I cannot tell you that I had much interaction with white people, it was a Black community and I'll say a successful Black community.

HARVEY 00:06:14

Did you go to high school? Do they--

SADIE 00:06:15

Oh God, yes, I went to Douglas Elementary School, all Blacks, then Jack Yates High School, all Blacks, teachers, principals, counselors. And I was, believe it or not, at that time, the schools did not have where you could push a button and the announcements would go into every class. I was to school announcer, so I had to go from room to room and room to room to make announcements. And as a result, I didn't do much math, because I was too busy making announcements in the classroom. The dean of the girls chose me, and I did that my whole four years in high school. That's why I can talk so much now, Harvey.

HARVEY 00:07:03

(laughs) That's wonderful. Okay. You went to business school after high school.

SADIE 00:07:10

I went to Hughes Business College, of which I graduated.

HARVEY 00:07:14

Okay.

SADIE 00:07:15

And I graduated with honors. And the school always had placements to give their graduates. I was the one graduate that they could not place because the white businesses would not take a Black girl or a Black young

woman. So when I came to California, it was my first business job with a Black insurance which was called Golden State Insurance Company.

HARVEY 00:07:43

Okay. And again, why did you come to California?

SADIE 00:07:49

Believe it or not, my sister had married and moved and her husband--they were the Great Migration that came during the ship channel. She married a fellow who was a welder at the shipyard and encouraged me to come. As I said, when I graduated, there was no job for me in Houston, because they claim they did not want a Black girl in their office or whatever.

HARVEY 00:08:18

Were their white people in the business school who were students with you?

SADIE 00:08:23

Yes, yes, there was, that was my first interaction with whites, I would say.

HARVEY 00:08:27

What was it like interacting with those students?

SADIE 00:08:30

Wonderfully well because I just get along with everyone.

HARVEY 00:08:34

You are good at that.

SADIE 00:08:35

I work as a human being and you know, and I just--so I got along very well, as a matter, I graduated with honors, but I still could not get a job.

HARVEY 00:08:46

So you come out to California, and what'd you do out in California. Well you got the job at the insurance company--

SADIE 00:08:51

Which was a Black insurance company, Golden State Insurance Company. I've worked with them for years.

HARVEY 00:08:59

Oh you did, what city was that? What city was that in?

SADIE 00:09:04

San Francisco.

HARVEY 00:09:05

San Fran, okay.

SADIE 00:09:06

That's where I migrated to, San Francisco. But that's where my brother-in-law and my sister lived, and he worked in the shipyards.

HARVEY 00:09:15

Which--

SADIE 00:09:16

The shipyards.

HARVEY 00:09:17

Right? What--You made your first husband in San Francisco?

SADIE 00:09:23

No, I married in Houston, Texas. When I came here, I was married.

HARVEY 00:09:27

Oh, okay.

SADIE 00:09:27

My first husband was a longshoreman. In fact, I encouraged him to become, he knew nothing at all. His name was John Dawson Jones, and I met him and married him. And when I moved to California, he worked as a longshoreman after he got out of the Navy. And he passed. And then Cleophas Williams spoke at my husband's funeral.

HARVEY 00:09:55

When was that? What year was that?

SADIE 00:09:59

Let's see. I would say 1960, somewhere in the in the 60's, because I had two children. I had Jacqueline, who is four years older than her brother, Dan.

HARVEY 00:10:15

So, Cleophas spoke at your husband's funeral?

SADIE 00:10:18

And as we were leaving to go to the cemetery to bury my first husband and my children's father, I asked the driver to stop and go get that gentleman's name. And he brought back the name Cleophas Williams, which I had never, but they had worked on the waterfront together. So Cleophas spoke very eloquently as you know he could do, and I was highly impressed, so I got his name and address. At that time, my daughter Jacqueline was at [?Prairie View?] College, which is a Black college, although she had gone to white schools in San Francisco and graduated from Bishop O'Dowd, but I think she was about the only two blacks in her class at Bishop O'Dowd. And when she went to [?Prairie View?] in [?Prairie View?], Texas because I wanted her to go to a Black school, she was highly impressed with the intelligence of the Black people there.

HARVEY 00:11:22

Why did you want her to go to a Black school?

SADIE 00:11:24

Because she had only had relationships with integrated schools and whites. She knew nothing about the South, being born in San Francisco. So that's why, In fact, both of my children went back South. I sent my son back--as I said, she's four years older, so--to Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas.

HARVEY 00:11:52

Why did you want them to go--

SADIE 00:11:53

I wanted them to really know what the Black community was like and how intelligent, and how--we would say--how middle class Blacks are. And I wanted them to have that experience.

HARVEY 00:12:08

Okay, very interesting. (pauses) Were you involved in the 1960's politics in the larger community beyond the waterfront?

SADIE 00:12:20

Actually, I would have to say no, I never was so involved in any politics until I married Cleophas. I was so busy raising my family. I was a housewife. I did the best of my work at the insurance company. And then I did a little bout a Kaiser as PBX operator. (laughs) I never did too much in the business and I never really participated too

much in the marches and the various things that was going on. I'm really sorry that I didn't, but I did not. I was busy raising my family, Harvey.

HARVEY 00:12:58

Okay, got it. Okay, so what--you got the business card--you got the contact information for this person, this Cleophas Williams guy...

SADIE 00:13:10

Magnificent guy and Cleophas I were married 50 years. And I participated with him. In fact, we were married when he became the first Black president of ILWU.

HARVEY 00:13:28

What was it like being married to a pioneering political guy who became political and when you know, he's an officer, for a time president?

SADIE 00:13:41

He was extremely political, because he had suffered so severely during the Depression. When I think of what Cleophas went through during the Depression, it brings tears to my eyes even today, because it was so hard for him, which I knew nothing about.

HARVEY 00:13:59

Can you recount it a little bit? I know it was hard.

SADIE 00:14:01

Oh my gosh, it was so hard for him. So he was very political. Yes.

HARVEY 00:14:06

Okay.

SADIE 00:14:08

And he certainly loved--sometimes I used to think he loved international longshoreman better than he did me! (laughs) He was truly a union man.

HARVEY 00:14:20

Yeah, yeah. What did he tell you about his life in the South growing up?

SADIE 00:14:26

(sighs) Horrible things. He had hungry days. He had--he and his father--his father had one arm, he had a hook on his arm, and they had planted a garden of corn. And night raiders came through it. Of course, you know his story. I think it's because you have written about Cleophas in a number of times and he appears in many one of your books, I think I'd say almost every one of your books. So he had a real hard life, certainly totally different than my life was in the South.

HARVEY 00:15:02

Okay. There were--you went on a number of trips withCleophas for the union or with?

SADIE 00:15:10

Cleophas I went on--we went to every continent and many countries within the continent. We went more with United Methodist, the world Methodist conference than we did with ILWU. Although we went on trips with ILWU. We went to New Zealand and--I started saying Singapore but Singapore was with United Methodist. We went on several trips with ILWU, yeah.

HARVEY 00:15:45

Did you go to Australia?

SADIE 00:15:46

Australia and New Zealand we went and it was a fantastic trip. And all the longshoremen that went on that trip was treated by the Australian people. We got ready of the check out of our hotel, the union they said, "You owe absolutely nothing," they paid for our whole stay, treated us. First time that ever happened Cleophas and I because generally we go out of pocket.

HARVEY 00:16:14

Okay. (pauses) Conor, do you have some--

SADIE 00:16:23

I think you need to read all of Harvey's books, and you'd learn more about Cleophas. And of course, I think he's not gonna ever say anything without talking about his wife, Sadie.

HARVEY 00:16:35

It's true. Conor, do you have any questions? You have any questions?

CONOR 00:16:43

You know, one of the things we've kind of asked folks about is what--you mentioned, always considering yourself a working class person, a middle class person--about the level of consistency that being in a longshore family allowed you know, economically. Can you talk a little bit about that?

SADIE 00:17:02

Yes, if you come a little closer so I can hear you better.

CONOR 00:17:05

Sure, yeah, yeah. Could you talk a little bit about what it was like to have somebody who was working in the longshore union in terms of economic security or income or healthcare, what did that--

SADIE 00:17:18

Absolutely 100% of economic security and most certainly 100% healthcare, even today at 95 I am well cared for. I live in a beautiful retirement home where the rent is high, but because of ILWU, I can afford to be there. And of course you know about our medical, everything is just so wonderful. There is nothing in the world like International Longshoreman and the benefits of being a member of International Longshoremen. I'm grateful, as I said, all of my life, I've been on the waterfront, but I am one grateful human being.

CONOR 00:17:27

Do you remember any stories folks would talk about, about their work lives or any stories that happened to you being on the waterfront either in Texas or in San Francisco? What things happened?

SADIE 00:18:19

On the Waterfront in Texas, I was very young and of course, naturally I left when I was still, I think I must have been about 18, 17 or 18 years old, because I married when I was 18, so I left very early. The only thing I knew that my father ran the restaurant and we always had food because he went to the, you know, he always bought for the restaurant, so that meant the house had food and all the food that he--so I don't know anything about those days, but then the waterfront has been magnificent to me. I am ever so grateful for International Longshore and Warehouse Union. It has made a difference in my 95 years. I think that's why I can look and feel and be as healthy as I am and as strong as I am at 95 because of ILWU. I will say definitely because of ILWU. I've had good healthcare, I have good finances, I have been just blessed because of ILWU.

HARVEY 00:19:35

To kind of follow up--(to Conor) do you have another question? You do?

CONOR 00:19:40

Is it related to this? I have a different question.

HARVEY 00:19:43

A different question. Can you hold on? Okay. Related to that Sadie, In 1971, there was a there was a long strike that went into year 1972. Cleophas was president, I believe, at that time, in 1971, of Local 10.

SADIE 00:20:01

I think so.

HARVEY 00:20:02

How did you survive? Because it was a long, long strike.

SADIE 00:20:05

That was a long strike. But every time I'll tell you as Cleophas would tell you the first time he had ever made a loan and I wish I could remember the name of the company that he got a loan from. Because the lack of finance. Yes, there was a difference in our lives doing that long strike.

HARVEY 00:20:28

Right. What kind of a difference was in your life?

SADIE 00:20:32

Well, I guess the finances were limited.

HARVEY 00:20:36

Were you still working?

SADIE 00:20:39

Me?

HARVEY 00:20:40

Yeah.

SADIE 00:20:40

Oh, no, I was definitely a housewife and a parent.

HARVEY 00:20:44

Okay.

SADIE 00:20:45

I was a homebody.

HARVEY 00:20:47

Okay.

SADIE 00:20:47

Yeah. So I never worked. I don't--I can't--I just had a very short work life. Honestly, if I had to depend on my social security, I'd be out on the streets. (laughs)

CONOR 00:20:58

As somebody who's responsible for making the household run during that strike, do you remember what--how that impacted your--what strategies you used for--was there stuff that you worked with [inaudible]?

SADIE 00:21:08

I imagine I had to stretch the food and the dollars more. But truthfully, I never handled the finances. Cleophas always handled the money until he was really declined. I never shall forget, when he turned everything over to me, I couldn't believe it! But I managed and I'm still managing our finances. I'm very careful, even today at how I spend money, because I hope to live to be 100 and more, and I want my pensions and my finances to last. So I'm very mindful.

HARVEY 00:21:45

Did Cleo for say anything about the difficulties of being so politically involved?

SADIE 00:21:52

You know, when he was president, there was a time that somebody put at his office, a bomb at his office, it just so happened that he was not there. Oh, yeah, it was very difficult being a Black man and being president of such a union, very difficult for him. Someone put a bomb at his window. Yep, it was not easy.

HARVEY 00:22:20

No. Did he ever talk about--speaking of opposition, oppositional individuals--did he ever talk about the guy who had been president before whose name I'm not pulling up? It was a guy who was kind of a very conservative fellow, who was--who had been president, I think before?

SADIE 00:22:40

Before him?

HARVEY 00:22:41

Yeah. What was that guy's name? I can't--

SADIE 00:22:43

You and I cannot pull up his name, but I know who you're speaking of.

HARVEY 00:22:47

Yeah.

SADIE 00:22:48

Yes, there were some problems going on, but--

HARVEY 00:22:52

Did he talk about that much?

SADIE 00:22:53

Being the person that Cleophas was regardless to who confronted him, he could always handle it. Yes, he had some difficulties with the presidents of the union. And of course, you know, I think even today, they're not as willing to accept Black presidents. They're still difficult.

HARVEY 00:23:18

Did he say much about Harry Bridges?

SADIE 00:23:20

Oh, he loved Harry, but he inherited was not the closest of friends like Harry and [Bill] Chester. But he loved Harry, and I love Harry. I'm still grateful for what Harry, you know, Harry made that statement about if he had to hire two people on the waterfront one would be Black. And that really impressed Cleophas and Cleophas quoted that a lot of times, because that is what Harry said.

HARVEY 00:23:52

Right.

SADIE 00:23:52

I am indebted to Harry today.

HARVEY 00:23:56

What about Chester? What was what was Cleophas's relationship with Bill Chester?

SADIE 00:24:00

Chester and Cleophas were okay. I think Ethel and I were closer than Cleophas and Bill, because I was very close with Ethel, and after Bill died Ethel traveled to Hawaii with me and Cleophas, yeah.

HARVEY 00:24:17

Oh that was very nice.

SADIE 00:24:18

Oh yeah, we did a lot with Ethel, or I should say, Ethel did a lot with us. After Bill died.

HARVEY 00:24:24

How about Leroy King?

SADIE 00:24:26

Oh, very close, very close to Leroy, much closer, yes.

HARVEY 00:24:32

Do you know what he would do with Leroy? What kinds of things they would--what kind of union issues they would do?

SADIE 00:24:37

Oh, they would often talk, or they'd have lunch together, or they do things, a lot of things together, yes.

HARVEY 00:24:44

Okay. [to Conor] You had a question?

CONOR 00:24:49

Yeah. You talked about how what an eloquent speaker Cleophas was. Was he also--did he speak in church were you all [inaudible]?

SADIE 00:24:57

Oh my god at every funeral and for the union. That's why he spoken my husband--my first husband's--funeral, because he was the eloquent speaker for the union and most certainly for his church. And that's--I imagine that's why we went to World Methodist Conferences. We went all over the world, as I said, he and I went to every continent except the Antarctics (laughs) and many countries with them, and we went to Africa five times.

CONOR 00:25:27

Was there any relationship between the church and his work on the waterfront? Did he ever get support for--

SADIE 00:25:32

No, no, no. The church hardly knew anything about International Longshoreman and it's too bad, they should. There are no longshoremen in our church even today, but one. It's amazing. But then longshoreman built many, many of the Black churches, Black longshoremans built--and especially the Baptist churches--many longshoremen were the ones to build it because they had the finances to do it, but not close [inaudible]. Well, I was raised in Episcopal, I was raised Episcopal until I married Cleophas, and I tried to get him to become an Episcopalian. And he did, he went with me for a year, and that priests became canon at Grace Cathedral. And they sent a priest from New York that Cleophas didn't relate to at all. So then I told him, I said, "Well, I'll come to your church, which is United Methodist." And that's how I became a United Methodist, which I still am very active and very much in love with Downs United Methodist Church in Oakland.

CONOR 00:26:46

Well, you just taught me something that I didn't know, the importance of longshore workers, Black longshore workers, in building a lot of the churches in the community in the Bay Area. I didn't know that! [inaudible]

SADIE 00:26:54

And especially the Black churches.

CONOR 00:26:56

Huh, yeah, I didn't know that!

SADIE 00:26:57

Many longshoreman built those Black Baptist churches, because the United Methodist is more managed by hierarchies. So they don't just--you can't choose to open up a church because somebody told you you could preach. In the United Methodist you have to go to college. I have a granddaughter that just got her master's from Columbia in New York and she's now a minister in north in Colorado, but United Methodist educate their pastors. But Baptists? You just want to preach and maybe you want to open a church so you go and buy a building or something and preach, but a lot of longshoreman did that and built churches in the Black community.

HARVEY 00:27:55

(coughs) Bill Chester was a person who kind of made a big mark in the ILWU by going to the Black community to try to get Black community support for the ILWU. This is after he was made regional director in California

around 1951. And so, did you see any relationship there with what Cleophas was doing? This is kind of a stretch, I know.

SADIE 00:28:30

Not really, not really. For some reason Cleophas and Bill were not close.

HARVEY 00:28:36

Okay.

SADIE 00:28:37

Not as close as they could have been, I think.

HARVEY 00:28:41

Okay.

SADIE 00:28:43

Real good. Respect for one another? Yes.

CONOR 00:28:52

You mentioned how many different places you traveled together. Do you remember if you did some of the stuff on behalf of the longshore union and some of the stuff on behalf of your religious circles?

SADIE 00:29:03

Well, actually for the longshore, Cleophas went to many places representing the International Longshoremen.

CONOR 00:29:10

Do you remember any work that you might have been involved with or he was involved with in relation to international solidarity like farmworkers, or a boycott, or an apartheid thing, or Palestine? Do you remember any of those actions?

SADIE 00:29:23

I understand that Cleophas wrote the--I don't what to call it--proposition for Angela Davis. So to free Angela, he's the one who wrote the legislation of whatever the--what's the proper word that he wrote? Well, anyway, Cleophas wrote the--

HARVEY 00:29:44

Resolution for him?

SADIE 00:29:45

Resolution. Cleophas wrote the resolution to free Angela Davis, so he was very involved in that.

CONOR 00:29:55

Were you ever involved with auxiliary or supporting?

SADIE 00:29:59

Yes, I belong to the auxiliary. And I tell you what, I went to all the longshore conventions, I haven't missed one in fifty years. (laughs) And when we'd go to the convention, this was when he was an active worker, flew to Hawaii and various places, I can tell you one of the things that would disgust me. We would ask for a room with a view when we make our reservation, and I'd be darned if they wouldn't put us in a room overlooking the garage. And of course, I never accepted that. I'd pick up the phone immediately and say this room is not acceptable. And I talked about one time, I'd say every hotel we would check in. And I remember one of the times in Hawaii, I was so disgusted with being put over the garage when I asked for a room with a view. I went there downstairs and I was in tears and the president of International Longshore at that time was Brian McWilliams. I know how everyone remembers Brian, you know Brian McWilliams? And Brian became furious, too, that they would do that to us. And we always ended up in a wonderful room, yeah. 'Cause the same thing--and I remember Brighton, England--although that was for the church, for the United Methodist Church--they sent us up with some loose steps after we got off the elevator to a room. I couldn't believe it. It happened everywhere. Everywhere, the minute we'd show up, they'd give us a different room, and it was quite heartbreaking.

HARVEY 00:30:07

Yeah.

SADIE 00:30:16

Very heartbreaking. Every time I'd have to say this room is not acceptable. And they had in Brighton they sent us up after the elevator up some steps when I called and said, "Oh no, we can't accept this room," they gave us a room in the front--now, we would always go early because Cleophas would either have to be there same as he appears on the executive board here, be Here the Sunday before the meeting starts. So they gave us the most beautiful room right up front overlooking that beautiful beach in Brighton, England. So it has been a struggle, a real struggle because of the color of your skin. Which is to me the most stupid thing the United States could do. You're not gonna want me to get political, the older I get, the more political I get. I don't understand how United States can have inferior schools for their citizens because of the color of their skin. I cannot understand that our best citizens, our children grew up with less education than your children. And how could that be and our children are citizens? I don't understand it. It's heartbreaking.

HARVEY 00:33:18

It goes back to the original sin, it goes back to the original sin.

SADIE 00:33:20

You don't have to send your children, I'll say for my family, they both grown up and like I said, My daughter was but only two blacks in her class at Bishop O'Dowd. And then my grandson grew up in Livermore because his father worked for Lawrence Livermore Lab, born in Livermore and grew up in Livermore. So they went to the mixed--the integrated schools, while I might have some nephews who are in the Black community getting inferior education, it's very disturbing.

HARVEY 00:33:56

It goes back to the original sin of 1619.

SADIE 00:33:59

That's right, very disturbing, when I know it could be different, and it has been different with my family, but still, think of the families. There should be no inferior schools in the USA. And the beginning of the children's education is the most important thing in their lives.

HARVEY 00:34:23

On the same vein, how much different has had been in your experience inside the ILWU as opposed to the outside world, the outside community?

SADIE 00:34:36

Oh Harvey, it is so, so different. It's heartbreaking. It is so different even where I live, which I know you visited me a number of times. You know, it's a beautiful community in Oakland. I think--and I'll tell you this, that place is ninety-five years old and it's been within the last thirty years that any Blacks knew where it is and most certainly before any Blacks were allowed to live there. And it's ninety-five years old. And today you can hardly find five Blacks that know where that gated place is. It's one of Oakland's best kept secrets from the Black community. So it's hard, but as I said, the older I get, the more political I am becoming.

HARVEY 00:35:31

Can you--would you contrast the living facility social structure or atmosphere to that of the ILWU?

SADIE 00:35:48

I don't know. There I get treated time to time. There some of the residents come in, they don't speak to me at all, some of the white residents, they don't speak, but it doesn't bother me 'cause I wouldn't speak to them whether they speak or not. (laughs) But there are some even where I live that just try to totally ignore me, but that's impossible. (laughs)

HARVEY 00:36:14

Can you contrast that with the ILWU--with your experience with people in the ILWU?

SADIE 00:36:18

You know, with ILWU, it seems to me they're more liberal, I think. I think the longshoremen are much more close with me, and I would say all of ILWU loves Sadie. (laughs) So I don't get that, but I don't know what some of the others might. I just think ILWU is much more liberal. I think we love our sisters and brothers and I do believe we believe an injury to one is an injury to all not because of your color.

CONOR 00:36:51

You're a really good speaker, do you speak in church, do you speak at the different events or?

SADIE 00:36:58

No, I don't, but I would if asked. I can--you can wake me up in the middle of the night and I can start a conversation, and it's because I was the announcer in high school. I have no problem talking and no problem holding the mic. And no problem expressing my true honest feelings, I have no problem with it. So if I was asked, I could speak anytime, anywhere

CONOR 00:37:34

Was Cleophas ever involved with that? Or organizing the drill team? The ILWU drill team?

SADIE 00:37:39

Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. The drill team, and I was their mascot for years.

CONOR 00:37:44

Oh yeah?

SADIE 00:37:45

Yeah! My pictures with the drill team--Oh, Josh Williams? You'll find Sadie's picture among them all the time. And not only that, if you go to the cruise terminal--what's his name?

HARVEY 00:38:06

Jimmy Herman.

SADIE 00:38:06

Herman, Jimmy Herman's cruise terminal and push the button and watch Jimmy Herman and Brian McWilliams, you'll see this beautiful Black lady with a white hat, and it's Sadie!

CONOR 00:38:18

(laughs)

SADIE 00:38:20

In the cruise terminal today, and Cleophas is in the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. A church member went there and she said she was in the labor section of the Smithsonian. And she heard a voice that sounded familiar and she followed it, and there she saw Cleophas speaking and visually in the Smithsonian in Washington, DC.

CONOR 00:38:48

I think I saw that, it's also got somebody's jacket and the hat. It's in the transportation section.

SADIE 00:38:53

Probably, that's Cleophas Williams you're looking at.

CONOR 00:38:57

(laughs) And for you, what did you do? Would you march in front of the drill team at parades with a flag? Or would you just--

HARVEY 00:39:04

You knew Josh Williams? (clears throat) You knew Josh Williams well, who founded the drill team?

SADIE 00:39:04

Well, I would always be with them whenever they posed for pictures. I don't know why I have a many picture with me and the drill team, so I called myself the mascot. Oh, I've been around a long time now, ninety-five years is a lot. (laughs) And I've never taken the back, I've never taken to the background I was always up front. Oh gosh yes, I love Josh, fantastic man. I love the drill team, even today. They marched at Cleophas's service. In fact, they came in before the family. We came in behind them and they marched us out. Oh yeah, at Cleophas's service. I love the drill team.

CONOR 00:39:55

Are any of your family members part of the union, too? Any of your children or nephews or nieces?

SADIE 00:40:00

Would you you believe I personally do not have a member on the waterfront? But it's--I would love to say, like I heard someone today say, "I'm third generation." I would love for some of my families to say that, but I must say, they're all professionals because we made sure all of our children, my children, my children's children, my grandchildren--and I have five generations--all have college education. We made sure, we sacrificed. Now that's what I spend my money on, to educate my young people. I might watch my dollar when it comes to Sadie, but I'll splurge when it comes to sending my kids to better schools, because I don't understand why inferior schools, or I just don't understand why the United States will have inferior schools for any citizen.

HARVEY 00:41:02

You paid tuition and things like that?

SADIE 00:41:04

Oh, I would pay a tuition in a minute. Cleophas and I one time had three kids in college. So we were spending our dollars. We didn't pay tuition, we did whatever they needed, whenever they needed help. Because we gave them allowance, we always made sure, we sent--one time as I say, we had three, so we had--we were sending three allowances. Our kids and my family, well, to five generations, some of them are just four years old. But that's where--I don't even want a funeral when I die, I want to be sure you take my money and spend it, send all my grands my great, great, great grands to college. A funeral, memorial? Nothing, no, no, don't make that mortician. Better a child get a better education than mine. So just you, Harvey, and you, remember me in your heart when I'm gone, because you're not gonna come to no ceremony. It's too expensive to put that on one of my great-great five generations I have, all are blessed. Five generations at ninety-five and in my right mind.

HARVEY 00:42:23

Seems like it.

SADIE 00:42:24

I'm in my right mind, Harvey! (laughs)

HARVEY 00:42:28

I know.

CONOR 00:42:30

Do you remember being part of any Bloody Thursday celebrations?

SADIE 00:42:33

I'm at every Bloody, but I'm not a part of, but I'm there. I love those men sacrificed their lives for me. Yes, yes. I tell you I love International Longshoreman. Its (pauses) the most important thing to me, I love it. I love all the members, I love all the officers, and I think they're all doing such magnificent, magnificent job. And I'm triple proud of Willie Adams, I must say that from my heart, I am truly, truly proud. And he's quite capable of taking this union where it needs to go. The man has been there, he's been there and done that. We don't need any new people in there that has not been there. He's quite, quite capable of taking this union where it has to go.

CONOR 00:43:38

You have a real--you must have a real perspective because you've been able to see different presidents and the way in which they've responded.

SADIE 00:43:44

You know, I knew--I think I knew any number of presidents, and I love them all and I got along with all of them. I got along with them better than Cleophas in some cases.

CONOR 00:43:55

Think that sometimes your ability to talk to people would help?

SADIE 00:44:00

I think so. I think so, yes, I would love to. Yes.

HARVEY 00:44:08

Did you have much to do with David Arian?

SADIE 00:44:11

Oh, yes. I love David Arian. I loved all the presidents, name them all and I can tell you my relationship with them.

HARVEY 00:44:20

Oh golly. Well, it goes all the way back to Harry Bridges.

SADIE 00:44:23

Well, Harry Bridges and--

HARVEY 00:44:26

Jimmy Herman.

SADIE 00:44:27

Jimmy Herman, and Brian McWilliams. You just name them.

HARVEY 00:44:33

Okay.

SADIE 00:44:33

I knew them all, and they all knew me.

HARVEY 00:44:38

How about Big Bob McEllrath?

SADIE 00:44:42

Apple of my eye

HARVEY 00:44:44

Oh, how come, how so?

SADIE 00:44:45

I think he did a magnificent job with leading this union. Big Bob?

HARVEY 00:44:53

Yeah, yes. Why do you say that?

SADIE 00:44:57

Because he saved all of our pensions, and he's--I just think he did a magnificent job, and I know Willie [Adams] will do a magnificent job. Yeah, I knew them all, they all knew me. Not necessarily talking politics 'cause they didn't talk politics to me, they'd talk politics to Cleophas.

HARVEY 00:45:24

Do you remember any stories about Big Bob? That is, like any event that you talked to him about or?

SADIE 00:45:32

No, no, I don't. I really don't.

HARVEY 00:45:35

Okay. But you interacted with him?

SADIE 00:45:40

Yes, as far as being friendly and knowing him as a person.

HARVEY 00:45:48

How well do you know Willie? I mean, how well do you really know Willie, Willie Adams?

SADIE 00:45:52

I don't know Willie any more than I knew any of them, I don't think, except through Cleophas. I let them all know I love them.

CONOR 00:46:09

What do we need to know--so, we're lucky enough to interview you about your experience but you're also talking to somebody maybe fifty years in the future because they might look at this. What what should they know about your life and the union?

SADIE 00:46:22

Fifty years, I wish the young longshoremen really understood what it took to build this union, its foundation, its solid foundation, and they should value it and take care of it. Now, it used to be that that's why you get all this first, second third generation because most of them came from union families. But now they're getting them out of the city from any place and they know nothing. Just like my first husband, if it had not been for my father, he had never heard the word longshore. And a lot of these men that's being hired now--men and women--know nothing about what it took to build this union. So they're not as mindful of taking care of it. They need to be taught the value of this union. It is--it didn't just happen. Men gave their lives to build.

CONOR 00:47:21

And what do you think the most important things that you've learned or taken away from the union have been about, you know, the experience? What lessons have you taken away from the union?

SADIE 00:47:34

The thing is, to me, that young men need to know what it is to mean "solidarity" and what it means "an injury to one is an injury to all." These young men seem to come in and the only thing they're interested in is their own profit or their own big car, or big house. That doesn't mean a thing. A car can blow up, a house can burn down.

It's much more important to build a solidarity between the brothers and the sisters than to worry about material things, material things all pass away. So the men seem to not care about how the union stays strong.

CONOR 00:48:27

In that way the union sort of has some similarities to the religious community, because it's bringing people together.

SADIE 00:48:34

Yes, well, they need to come together and attend the union meetings. Now I told you, my families are most, or all, professionals because they graduated from college, but I tell them if there's a union in your professional--like one of my granddaughters that's here with me now who's a RN [registered nurse], in fact, she's a nurse in charge where she works--"Be sure you're part of the union." I have a great-great-grandson who has not graduated from college yet, but he works for Ford or Chrysler in Detroit. I tell him, "Get in the union and be sure you attend the union meetings." The people don't even attend union meetings anymore. But that's very, very important. Be behind your union. Where I live--and I won't say too much about that because they're not in a union, and the people are getting such small salaries with no benefits, and they have families to take care of. So we have a heavy turnover, heavy, because soon as they hear of a job that pays $3 more, they'll quit and go to that job. So unions--to me unions are the greatest thing for any working class people. Union's, my life, I was born in it. My father's checks, my father's vouchers went up to the union and got checks. So yeah. I have a lot to say about unions and about the importance of being a strong union member.

HARVEY 00:50:22

What have we missed? Have we missed anything? Have we missed a big topic?

SADIE 00:50:25

What?

HARVEY 00:50:26

Have we missed a big topic at all? What have we missed in our discussion today? Did we miss anything major?

SADIE 00:50:32

I don't know. What do you think, both of you?

CONOR 00:50:35

Well, you're the expert. I mean, we--you have such a great perspective about your own life and all the things you've seen.

SADIE 00:50:42

I don't think you missed much. You talked about how important it is that the young people know and understand the value of a union. You've talked about the officers and about how we are working class people, and we need to stick together in solidarity, otherwise we'll be destroyed. And you're really not going to want me to get off on this robot thing. I was in Los Angeles last month at the hotel there and there's a robot going down the hall delivering food to people's doors. Got on the elevator with me, I mean a robot. So they're taking jobs, when before someone had to bring the food to your room. I mean, I stood there just like you with my mouth open, watching this robot come. Got on the elevator with me, got off the elevator, went on down the hall to the room! So I guess the person must have known. I really hate that I did not go to see where that robot originated from which was in the snack bar somewhere down there. My mouth is still open. When I came here, going through customs, as you did and you did, there was no one there to--you know, you go, you put your passport and get it photographed? There's mazes and maze and maze and no people at customs. Did you witness this? A lady came through, and by the time she--they take your picture you stand up--for some reason my picture didn't happen on that thing. So they just had my name, but they got my two granddaughters' pictures. You go through this ad there's one person waiting to take that paper from you before you get to the baggage. A lady had a seizure. One of the persons coming here, there was no one there to help her. I had to jump off my scooter to grab a wheelchair to keep her from hitting the floor. I experienced that coming here because of automation and robot crap. No one was there to help this lady. And she was left to go to the floor. It's a first person I was with held and held her and was screaming for somebody to come. I realized--I jumped off my scooter, ran it, and got a wheelchair for her to sit here. And of course then she stayed in the wheelchair all the way through. So, this is a bad situation, removing human beings, the presence of human beings.

HARVEY 00:53:59

What was the robot?

SADIE 00:54:02

The little robot that was at the hotel where I was? It was a round tank, a brown tank thing, and you open the top of it and put the food down in it or take the food out.

HARVEY 00:54:17

What will this mean for the Black community in the long run?

SADIE 00:54:22

Well, Black people will not have jobs at all, because they're the ones with the million jobs anyway. There's gonna be more homeless people, I'm afraid of. Many of these uneducated--and lots and lots of Blacks are uneducated. I mean, the whole community. I mean, whole community of Blacks are uneducated. Gonna be--I don't really know what's gonna happen in USA. It's gonna be people starving on the streets, I expect. It's a sad situation.

HARVEY 00:55:06

Yeah. We seem to not have much help from Washington [DC].

SADIE 00:55:11

Oh, that subject I won't even go into. (pauses) You know, he wants to bring America--what is it?--make America great again? Well, you know that was during the time you were bringing the slaves over.

CONOR 00:55:31

It'd be nice to be great just once. (laughs)

SADIE 00:55:35

But, you know what I was saying to you about middle class Blacks, and you said you didn't know that there were? There were middle class Blacks on the slave ship because everybody on that ship was not down in that hole where they were stacked, people were stacked, and they came with holes, you know, defecating and urinating all on one another. There were some blacks that was in the kitchen, cooking, there was some up there cleaning. There was some women being what they call belly warmers, if you know what a belly woman is, or was. So those were middle class Blacks, even then on the slave ship. Those people never, never, never knew, those Blacks never knew what was going on down there. So there are those families, and when they came to these various places in USA, they were treated different because they had been. They'd been up there with the white man that loved them. They loved those Black women and love their cooks, men or women, because they served them. So there's always been two classes of Blacks.

HARVEY 00:57:02

Yeah. That's like the house slaves and the field slaves.

SADIE 00:57:07

Absolutely. There's two classes. Absolutely. Same thing on the ships that brought them over here. Yep.

CONOR 00:57:25

I can see why you're standing with the robots, but those those folks are going to get hit the most.

SADIE 00:57:31

Oh my gosh, yes. They're really gonna be replaced. The little common laborers are going to be totally replaced. Where are they going? What are they gonna do? It's frightening.

HARVEY 00:57:52

Yeah.

SADIE 00:57:53

It's frightening.

HARVEY 00:57:59

Got anything more? I think we got it.

CONOR 00:58:01

Thank you, thank you for your time.

HARVEY 00:58:02

Thank you very much.

CONOR 00:58:04

That was brilliant.

SADIE 00:58:05

I can run it. (laughs)

CONOR 00:58:08

(laughs)

HARVEY 00:58:08

(laughs)

SADIE 00:58:12

You can ask me anything, and I'll tell you from my heart, and I will tell you it's the way I feel. I will not tell you that I'm right, but it's truly, truly my feelings. Because I will express my feelings to anyone that asked me a question.

HARVEY 00:58:31

Yeah, yeah.

CONOR 00:58:32

Yeah.

HARVEY 00:58:36

Well, we were--we were talking about where certain improvements in the society have been made in the 1960's and contrasting it to the current administration in Washington, DC. You want to call it? Have we--are we still making progress, or what?

SADIE 00:59:00

We're not making progress, we've been set back so far. And it's gonna take us awhile to get over the setback that we've had during this administration. It's not gonna happen overnight.

HARVEY 00:59:14

No.

SADIE 00:59:17

We're gonna get far worse before we get better as Americans.

HARVEY 00:59:26

How do you feel, observing that as a person who's ninety-five? What does it--How does that make you feel?

SADIE 00:59:32

It breaks my heart and it really breaks my heart because there's nothing I can do about it. I would say there's nothing anyone can do about it, unless we come together collectively, Black and white. But I tell you what, I do believe. I do believe our mixed breed children are going to make a difference, and there's a lot of mixed breeds.

HARVEY 00:59:56

Oh, Obama sure tried. He was one.

SADIE 00:59:59

Say what?

HARVEY 01:00:00

Obama tried, he was one.

SADIE 01:00:02

Yeah, well, I know--I mean, there's a lot of children that's out there today that's mixed breed, and they're not gonna let you mistreat my father because he was Black and my mother was white or vice versa. So, this really--I have some mixed breeds in my family and I do believe they can make a difference.

HARVEY 01:00:23

(laughs) Hey, we can hope, we all, you know.

SADIE 01:00:34

Well, that's what we're living on, hope. Yep.

HARVEY 01:00:41

Great. Thank you, Sadie.

SADIE 01:00:44

You're welcome, Harvey. And you're most welcome?

CONOR 01:00:48

Conor.

HARVEY 01:00:50

Conor Casey.

CONOR 01:00:50

Thank you so much.

SADIE 01:00:54

[inaudible]

CONOR 01:00:54

C--Conor. C-O-N-O-R.

SADIE 01:00:56

Oh, C-O--Conor. All right, thank you, Conor.

CONOR 01:01:01

(laughs)

SADIE 01:01:01

It's a pleasure speaking with you, too.

HARVEY 01:01:04

Last name is Casey.

SADIE 01:01:04

And of course, you know this man, he's another one, this apple of my eye. I love Harvey.

HARVEY 01:01:10

Thank you, Sadie. His last name is Casey, C-A-S-E-Y, like Casey Stengel.

CONOR 01:01:16

(laughs)

SADIE 01:01:18

Alright, what a name!